



Committee on Student Fees and Budget Review

UNIT REPORT: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Introduction to the Unit

Across five centers, the Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP) offers developmental childcare and education for infants, toddlers and preschool children of Berkeley's faculty, staff and students.

Serving approximately 230 families and 65 children, the childcare centers operate year round with the exception of a one-week break in early August and a two-week break in December. Of the 230 parents the unit serves, roughly one third are student families. Student families are the most heavily subsidized subgroup, with 65 subsidized families and only 10 full fee families. ECEP's mission is to provide "a high quality developmental child development program for the care and education of children of University Families."

The Early Childhood Education Program has a total budget of 1.2 million. ECEP receives \$540,443 from the State Department of Education Child Development Division, and \$658,462 from SSF. This unit does not receive any funding from UC Berkeley and operates as a self-sustaining auxiliary. Two thirds of its funds are used on staffing. ECEP is committed to covering full commercial costs for student parents who demonstrate financial need.

Unit Director Meeting Findings

Although the ECEP runs as a self-sustaining program, they are running a deficit that is predicted to increase in upcoming years. To date, RSSP (Residential and Student Services Program) has been covering any deficit incurred. This past year, RSSP covered a \$500,000 deficit from the ECEP program, but it is unclear how much longer RSSP will be able to cover budget gaps.

Part of the reason that they are generating a deficit is due to their subsidized families. ECEP does not discriminate in enrolling subsidized versus non-subsidized families, but full-fee families are experiencing a price increase of 3% to cover the cost of subsidized families, and ECEP does not want to continue increasing costs for full-fee families. Nearly all student-families are granted subsidized enrollment costs, with the exception of 20 graduate students who pay the full fee.

Most of their operating budget, approximately 2/3, goes towards employee salaries, which have increased 18-20% over the past three years due to increasing union salaries. Even so, teachers in the ECEP program are already making less than the average salary at similar programs. ECEP would be able to lower their operating costs if they had better facilities—currently, staffing 5 separate centers is inefficient and costly. If they were given a unified building space with more classrooms, they would be able to save on the administrative costs of fully staffing 5 facilities. They have already spoken to the university regarding their Strategic Plan to be granted cost-effective space when the university considers the acquisition of new buildings.

Last year, ECEP was granted \$134,700 for a pilot program to run summer childcare sessions. The grant was able to cover one session during the summer of 2014 and will also cover the operating costs of running another program in the summer of 2015. The initial pilot program in 2014 was very successful, and allowed student parents to take summer classes and get involved with in summer internships.

ECEP feels their role in the student-parent community is integral, as their childcare program allows parents to focus on their education without worrying about their child's safety. As the facilities are located near or around campus, parents are able to visit in between classes and visit the classroom, easing their minds and creating a more cohesive classroom environment.

They recently opened a new infant-toddler center at Dwight Way, and it is already at maximum enrollment. ECEP would like to serve additional families if they were able to grow their program. ECEP works closely with HeadStart to try to find alternative childcare programs for families who they cannot accommodate due to size restrictions, but this is not always a feasible option and they have had to reject many families.

Compliance with Guidelines

The SSF guidelines indicate that the student services fee is intended for use for, but not limited to: services related to psychological health and well-being of students, social and recreational programs, services related to campus life and community, and career support.

The ECEP fulfills these criteria, by allowing student-parents to attend classes and perform well academically without the stress of 24/7 childcare. By having their children enrolled in such a program, they are able to focus on classes, academics, and their careers. Families who participate in the ECEP find it highly beneficial and say that it promotes a sense of community within the student-parent network. As such, it appears that ECEP is in compliance with the guidelines for SSF allocation usage.

Preliminary Recommendations

ECEP would definitely benefit from additional funding, which would be used to increase enrollment and provide subsidized care for families who do not qualify for government subsidies but are still in need. ECEP only benefits a small portion of the student population, but those they help are greatly aided by the services they provide.

We believe the best course of action would be to maintain the current amount of funding allocated to ECEP, but look into long-term strategies to minimize operating expenses. For example, if they

were granted building space with room for a minimum of 6 classrooms, they could operate much more efficiently than the current plan of operating several 2-4 room centers allows.

The after-school programs run by ECEP were very effective and actually generated revenue for the program, but had to be cut because they needed the classroom space for younger students. In order to reduce future deficits, we recommend that ECEP be able to continue their after-school programs, which is contingent on being granted more classroom and building space by the University.